

A

SERMON

Preach'd at the

FUNERAL

OF THE

Right Honourable

JOHN Earl of ROCHESTER,

Who Died at *Woodstock-Park*, July 26. 1686. and
 was Buried at *Spilsbury* in *Oxfordshire*. Aug. 9.

By Robert Parsons, M. A. Chaplain to the Right
 Honourable ANNE Countess-Dowager of
 ROCHESTER.

L O N D O N:

Printed and Sold by RICHARD MASEY, in
 London-House-Yard, near St. Paul's. 1723.

Advertisement.

ALL the *Lewd* and *Profane* Poems and *Libels* of the late Lord *Rochester* having been (contrary to his *dying Request*, and in defiance of *Religion, Government, and common Decency*) Publish'd to the World; and (for the easier and surer Propagation of Vice) Printed in Penny-books, and cry'd about the Streets of this *Honourable City*, without any Offence or Dislike taken at them: 'Tis humbly hoped that this short Discourse, which gives a true Account of the *Death and Repentance* of that noble Lord, may likewise (for the sake of his Name) find a favourable Reception among some Persons. Tho' the Influence of it cannot be supposed to reach as far as the Poyson of the other Books is spread; which, by the Strength of their own virulent Corruption, are capable of doing more Mischief than all the *Plays and Fairs, and Stews*, in and about this Town can do together.

St. Luke 15. 7.

I say unto you, that likewise Joy shall be in Heaven over one Sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just Persons that need no Repentance.

IF ever there were a Subject that might deserve and exhaust all the treasures of Religious Eloquence in the description of so great a Man, and so great a Sinner as now lies before us; together with the wonders of the Divine Goodness, in making him as great a Penitent; I think the present Occasion affords one as remarkable as any Place or Age can produce.

INDEED, so great and full a Matter it is, that 'tis too big to come out of my Mouth, and perhaps not all of it fit or needful so to do. The greatness of his Parts are well enough known, and of his Sins too well in the World; and neither my Capacity, nor Experience, nor my Profession, will allow me to be so proper a Judge, either of the one or the other. Only as God has been pleased to make me a long while a sad Spectator, and a secret Mourner for his Sins; so has he at last graciously heard the Prayers of his nearest Relations, and true Friends, for his Conversion and Repentance: And 'tis the good Tidings of that especially, which God has done for his Soul, that I am now to *publish and tell abroad to the World*, not only by the obligations of mine Office, in which I had the Honour to be a weak

Minister to it, but by his own express and dying Commands.

Now altho', to describe this worthily, would require a Wit equal to that with which he lived, and a Devotion too, equal to that with which he died, and to match either will be a very hard Task; yet besides that, I am not sufficient for these things, (for who is?) and that my Thoughts have been rather privately busied to secure a real Repentance to him self, whilst living, than to publish it abroad to others in an artificial Dress after he is dead: I say, besides all this, I think I shall have less need to call in the Aids of secular Eloquence. The proper Habit of Repentance is not fine Linnen, or any delicate Array, such as are used in the Court, or King's Houses, but Sack-cloth and Ashes: And the way which God Almighty takes to convey it, is not by the Words of Mans Wisdom but by the plainness of his written Word, assisted by the inward Power and Demonstration of the Spirit: And the effects it works, and by which it discovers it self, are not any Raptures of Wit and Fancy, but the most humble Prostrations both of Soul and Spirit, and the captivating all humane Imaginations to the obedience of a despised Religion, and a crucified Saviour.

AND 'tis in this Array I intend to bring out this Penitent to you; an Array which I am sure he more valued, and desired to appear in, both to God and the World, than in all the triumphs of Wit and Gallantry, and therefore (waving all these Rhetorical Flourishes, as beneath the Solemnity of the Occasion, and the Majesty of that great and weighty Truth I am now to deliver) I shall content my self with the Office of a plain Historian, to relate faithfully and impartially what I saw and heard; especially during his Penitential Sorrows; which if all that hear me this Day

Day, had been Spectators of, there would then have been no need of a Sermon to convince Men, but every Man would have been as much a Preacher to himself of this Truth, as I am, except these Sorrows: And yet even these Sorrows should be turn'd into Joys too, if we would only do what we pray for, that *the Will of God may be done in Earth as it is in Heaven*: for so our Blessed Lord assures us; *I say unto you, that likewise Joy shall be in Heaven over one Sinner that repenteth, &c.* From which I shall consider,

I. *The Sinner particularly that is before us.*

II. *The Repentance of this Sinner, together with the Means, the Time, and all probable Sincerity of it.*

III. *The Joy that is in Heaven, and should be on Earth, for the Repentance of this Sinner.*

IV. *I shall apply my self to all that hear me; that they would join in this Joy, in Praise and Thanksgivings to God for the Conversion of this Sinner; and if there be any that have been like him in their Sins, that they would also speedily imitate him in their Repentance.*

And 1. Let us consider the Person *before us*, as he certainly was a great Sinner. But because Man was upright before he was a Sinner, and to measure the greatness of his Fall, it will be necessary to take a View of that Height from which he fell; give me leave to go back a little to look into the Rock from which he was hewn, the Quality, Family, Education, and Personal Accomplishments of this Great Man. In doing of which, I think no Man will charge me with any design of customary Flattery, or Formality; since I intend only thereby to shew the greatness and unhappiness of his Folly, in the perverting

so many excellent Abilities and Advantages for Virtue and Piety in the Service of Sin, and so becoming a more universal, insinuating and prevailing Example of it.

As for his Family, on both sides, from which he was descended, they were some of the most famous in their Generations. His Grandfather was that excellent and truly great Man, *Charles Lord Wilmot*, Viscount *Athlone* in *Ireland*. *Henry* his Father, who inherited the same Title and Greatness, was by his late Majesty King *Charles I.* created Baron of *Adderbury* in *Oxfordshire*, and by his present Majesty Earl of *Rochester*. He was a Man of signal Loyalty and Integrity indeed; and of such Courage and Conduct in Military Affairs as became a great General. His Mother was the Relict of Sir *Francis Henry Lee* of *Ditchley* in the County of *Oxford* Baronet, Grandmother to the present Right Honourable Earl of *Litchfield*, and the Daughter of that Generous and Honourable Gentleman Sir *John St. Johns* of *Lyddiard* in the County of *Wilts* Baronet, whose Family was so remarkable for Loyalty, that several of his Sons willingly offer'd themselves in the Day of Battle, and died for it; and whilst the Memory of the *English* or *Irish* Rebellion lasts, that Family cannot want a due Veneration in the Minds of any Person, that loves either God or the King.

As for his Education, it was in *Wadham* College in *Oxford*, under the Care of that Wise and Excellent Governour Dr. *Blanford*, the late Bishop of *Worcester*; there it was that he laid a good foundation of Learning and Study, tho' he afterwards built upon that foundation Hay and Stubble. There he first suck'd from the Breasts of his Mother the University, those Perfections of Wit and Eloquence, and Poetry, which afterwards

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by his own corrupt Stomach, were turn'd into Poison to himself and others; which certainly can be no more a Blemish to those Illustrious Seminaries of Piety and good Learning, than a disobedient Child is to a Wise and Virtuous Father, or the Fall of Man to the Excellency of Paradise.

A Wit he had so rare and fruitful in its Invention, and withal so choice and delicate in its Judgment, that there is nothing wanting in his Compositions to give a full Answer to that Question, what and where Wit is? Except the Purity and Choice of Subject. For had such excellent Seeds but fallen upon good Ground, and instead of pitching upon a Beast, or a Lust, been raised up on high, to celebrate the Mysteries of the Divine Love, in Psalms, and Hymns, and Spiritual Songs; I perswade my self we might by this time have receiv'd from his Pen, as excellent an Idea of Divine Poetry, under the Gospel, useful to the teaching of Virtue, especially in this Generation, as his profane Verses have been to destroy it. And I am confident, had God spared him a longer Life, this would have been the whole Business of it, as I know it was the Vow and Purpose of his Sickness.

His natural Talent was excellent, but he had hugely improv'd it by Learning and Industry, being thoroughly acquainted with all Classick Authors, both Greek and Latin; a thing very rare, if not peculiar to him among those of his Quality, which yet he used not, as other Poets have done, to translate or steal from them, but rather to better, and improve them by his own natural Fancy. And whoever reads his Compositions, will find all things in them so peculiarly Great, New and Excellent, that he will easily pronounce, That no he has lent to many others, yet he has borrowed

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rowed of none; and that he has been as far from a sordid imitation of those before him, as he will be from being reach'd by those that follow him.

HIS other Personal Accomplishments in all the Perfections of a Gentleman for the Court or Country, whereof he was known by all Men to be a very great Master, is no part of my Business to describe or understand; and whatever they were in themselves, I am sure they were but miserable Comforters to him, since they only ministred to his Sins, and made his Example the more fatal and dangerous; for so we may own, (nay I am obliged by him not to hide, but to shew the Rocks, which others may avoid) that he was once one of the *greatest of Sinners*.

AND truly none but one so great in Parts could be so. His Sins were like his Parts, from which they sprang, all of them high and extraordinary. He seem'd to affect something singular and paradoxical in his Impieties, as well as in his Writings, above the reach and thought of other Men; taking as much Pains to draw others in, and to pervert right ways of Virtue, as the Apostles and Primitive Saints did, *to save their own Souls, and them that heard them*. For this was the heightning and amazing Circumstance of his Sins, that he was so diligent and industrious to recommend and propagate them; not like those of old that *hated the Light*, but those the Prophet mentions, *Isaiah 3. 9. Who declare their Sins as Sodom, and hide it not; that take it upon their Shoulders, and bind it to them as a Crown; framing Arguments for Sin, making Profelytes to it, and writing Panegyricks upon Vice*.

NAY, so confirm'd was he in Sin, that he often times almost died a Martyr for it. God was pleas'd sometimes to punish him with the effects of his Folly, yet till now (he confessed) *they had no Power*

melt him into true Repentance; or if at any time he had some lucid Intervals from his Folly and Madness, yet (alas) how short and transitory were they? All that Goodness was but as a Morning Cloud, and as the early Dew which vanishes away; he still return'd to the same excess of Riot, and that with so much the more greediness, the longer he had fasted from it.

AND yet even this desperate Sinner, that one would think had made a *Covenant with Death*, and was at an *Agreement with Hell*, and just upon the brink of them both; God, to magnify the Riches of his Grace and Mercy, was pleased to snatch as a Brand out of the Fire. As St. Paul, tho' before a Blasphemer, a Persecutor, and Injurious, yet obtain'd Mercy, that in him Christ Jesus might shew forth all long-suffering, for a Pattern to them that should hereafter believe on him to everlasting Life. 1 Tim. 1. 13, 16. So God struck him to the Ground as it were by a Light from Heaven, and a Voice of Thunder round about him. In-
somuch that now the Scales fall from his Eyes, as they did from St. Paul's; his stony Heart was open'd, and streams of Tears gush'd out, the bitter but wholesome Tears of true Repentance.

AND that this may appear to be so, I think it necessary to account for these two Things.

I. For the means of it; that it was not barely the Effect of Sickness, or the fear of Death; but the Hand of God also working in them and by them manifestly.

II. For the Sincerity of it; which tho' none but God that sees the Heart, can tell certainly; yet Man even also may and ought to believe it; not only in the judgment of Charity, but of moral Justice, from all evident Signs of it, which

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were possible to be given by one in his Condition.

And 1st. For the Means or Method of his Repentance. That which prepared the Way for it was a sharp and painful Sickness, with which God was pleased to visit him; the Way which the Almighty often takes to reduce the wandering Sinner to the Knowledge of God and of himself. I will be unto Ephraim as a Lion, and as a young Lion unto the House of Judah; I, even I, will tear and go away, and none shall relieve him; I will go and return to my Place, till they acknowledge their Offence, and seek my Face; and in their Affliction they will seek me early, Hos. 5. 14, 15.

AND tho' to forsake our Sins then, when we can no longer enjoy them, seems to be rather the effect of Impotency and Necessity, than of Choice, and so not so acceptable or praise-worthy; yet we find God Almighty often uses the one to bring about the other; and improves a forced abstinence from Sin, into a settled loathing and a true detestation of it.

IT is true, there are such stubborn Natures, that like Clay, are rather hardened by the Fire of Afflictions; ungracious Children, that fly in the Face of their heavenly Father in the very instant when he is correcting them, or it may be like those Children who promise Wonders then, but presently after forget all. Such as these we have described, Psal. 78. 34, 35, 36, 37. *When he slew them, then they sought him, and they return'd and enquir'd early after God; then they remember'd that God was their Rock, and that the high God was their Redeemer, Nevertheless they did but flatter him with their Mouth, and lyed unto him with their Tongues, for their Heart was not right with him, neither continued they stedfast in his Covenant.* And

'tis probable this has been the Case formerly of this Person. But there was an evident difference betwixt the effects of this Sicknes upon him, and many others before: *He had other Sentiments of Things now, (he told me) and acted upon quite different Principles*; he was not vext with it as it was painfull, or hinder'd him from his Sins, which he would have roll'd under his Tongue all the while, and long'd again to be at; but he submitted patiently to it, accepted it as the Hand of God, and was thankful, blessing and praising God not only in, but for his Extremities. There was now no Cursings, no Railings or Reproaches to his Servants, or those about him, which in other Sickneses were their usual Entertainment, but he treated them with all the Meekness and Patience in the World, begging Pardon frequently of the meanness of 'em but for a hasty Word, which the Extremity of his Sicknes, and the Sharpness of his Pain might easily force from him. His Prayers were not so much for Ease or Health, or a continuance in Life; as for Grace, and Faith, and perfect Resignation to the Will of God. So that I think, we may not only charitably but justly conclude, that his Sicknes was not the chief Ingredient, but thro' the Grace of God, an effectual Means of a true, tho' late Repentance, as will best be judged by the Marks I am now to give you of the Sincerity of it; for which I am in the next Place to account.

II. AND 'twas the Power of the Divine Grace, and of that only, that brake thro' all those Obstacles that usually attend a Man in his Circumstances; that God (who is a God of infinite Compassion and Forbearance) allow'd him Leisure and Opportunity for Repentance; that he awaken'd him from his Spiritual Slumber by a pungent Sicknes; that he gave him such a Pre-

sence of Mind, as both to provide prudently for his Worldly Affairs, and yet not to be distracted or diverted by them from the Thoughts of a better World; that lengthened out his Day of Grace, and accompanied the ordinary means of Salvation, and the weak Ministry of his Word, with the convincing and over-ruling Power of his Spirit to his Conscience; which Word of God became to him *quick and powerful, sharper than any two-edged Sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of his Soul and Spirit*; and at last the Spirit of God witnessed to his Spirit, that now he was become *one of the Children of God*.

Now if the Thief upon the Cross (an Instance too much abused) was therefore accepted, because accompanied with all the Effects of a sincere Convert, which his Condition was capable of; as Confession of Christ in the midst of the Blasphemies of Pharisees, and his own lewd Companion, and desertion even of Christ's Disciples; if his Repentance be therefore judg'd real, because he seems to be more concern'd in the remembrance of Christ's future Kingdom than his own Death; if St. Paul was approv'd by the same more abundant Labours which he commended in the *Corinthians*, yea, *What Zeal? What Fear? What Vehement Desire?* 2 Cor 7. 11. I think I shall make it appear, that the Repentance of this Person was accompanied with the like hopeful Symptoms: And I am so sensible of that awful Presence both of God and Man before whom I speak, who are easily able to discover my Failings, That I shall not deliver any thing, but what I know to be a strict and religious Truth.

UPON my first Visit to him, (May 26. just at his Return from his Journey out of the *West*) he most gladly receiv'd me, shew'd me extraordinary Respects, upon the Score of mine Office,
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thank'd God, who had in Mercy and good Providence sent me to him, who so much needed my Prayers and Counsels; and acknowledging how unworthily heretofore he had treated that Order of Men, reproaching them, that they were Proud, and Prophesied only for Rewards; but now he had learnt how to value them; that he esteemed them the Servants of the most High God, who were to shew to him the Way to Everlasting Life.

At the same time I found him labouring under strange Trouble and Conflicts of Mind; his Spirit wounded, and his Conscience full of Terrors. Upon his Journey he told me, He had been arguing with greater Vigour against God and Religion than ever he had done in his Life time before, and that he was resolv'd to run them down with all the Arguments and Spite in the World, but, like the great Convert St. Paul, he found it hard to kick against the Pricks. For God at that time had so struck his Heart by his immediate Hand, that presently he argued as strongly for God and Virtue, as before he had done against it. That God strangely open'd his Heart, creating in his Mind most awful and tremendous Thoughts and Ideas of the Divine Majesty, with a delightful Contemplation of the Divine Nature and Attributes, and of the loveliness of Religion and Virtue. I never (said he) was advanced thus far towards Happiness in my Life before, tho' upon the Commissions of some Sins extraordinary, I have had some Checks and Warnings considerable from within, but still struggled with them, and so wore them off again. The most observable that I remember was this: One Day at an Atheistical Meeting, at a Person of Quality's, I undertook to manage the Cause, and was the principal Disputant against God and Piety, and for my Performances receiv'd the Applause of the whole Company; upon which my Mind was terribly struck, and

I immediately reply'd thus to my self. Good God! that a Man, that walks upright, that sees the wonderful Works of God, and has the Uses of his Senses and Reason, should use them to the defying of his Creator! But tho' this was a good beginning towards my Conversion, to find my Conscience touch'd for my Sins, yet it went off again; nay, all my Life long, I had a secret Value and Reverence for an honest Man, and lov'd Morality in others. But I had form'd an odd Scheme of Religion to my self, which would solve all that God or Conscience might force upon me; yet I was not ever well reconciled to the Business of Christianity, nor had that Reverence for the Gospel of Christ as I ought to have. Which estate of Mind continued till the 53 Chapter of *Isaiah* was read to him, (wherein there is a lively Description of the Sufferings of our Saviour, and the Benefits, thereof) and some other Portions of Scripture; by the Power and Efficacy of which Word, assisted by his Holy Spirit, God so wrought upon his Heart, that he declar'd, that the Mysteries of the Passion appear'd as clear and plain to him, as ever any thing did that was represented in a Glass; So that that Joy and Admirations, which possess'd his Soul upon the reading of God's Word to him, was remarkable to all about him; and he had so much delight in his Testimonies, that in my Absence he begg'd his Mother and Lady to read the same to him frequently, and was unsatisfied (notwithstanding his great Pains and Weakness) till he had learned the 53 Chapter of *Isaiah* without Book.

At the same Time, discoursing of his manner of Life from his Youth up, and which all Men knew was too much devoted to the Service of Sin, and that the Lusts of the Flesh, of the Eye, and the Pride of Life, had captivated him: He was very large and particular in his Acknowledgments

ments about it, more ready to accuse himself than I or any one else can be; publicly crying out, *O Blessed God, can such an horrid Creature as I am be accepted by thee, who has deny'd thy Being, and condemn'd thy Power? Asking often, Can there be Mercy and Pardon for me? Will God own such a Wretch as I? And in the middle of his Sickness said, Shall the unspeakable Joys of Heaven be confer'd on me? O Mighty Saviour! never, but thro' thine infinite Love and Satisfaction! O never, but by the purchase of thy Blood! adding, That with all abhorrency he did reflect upon his former Life; that sincerely and from his Heart he did repent of all that Folly and Madness which he had committed.*

Indeed he had a true and lively Sense of God's great Mercy to him in striking his hard Heart, and laying his Conscience open, which hitherto was deaf to all God's Calls and Methods: saying, *if that God, who died for great as well as lesser Sinners, did not speedily apply his infinite Merits to his poor Soul, his Wound was such as no Man could conceive or bear, crying out, that he was the vilest Wretch and Dog that the Sun shined upon, or the Earth bore; that he now saw his Error in not living up to that Reason which God endued him with, and which he unworthily vilify'd and condemn'd; wish'd he had been a starving Leper crawling in a Ditch, that he had been a Link-boy or a Beggar, or for his whole Life confin'd to a Dungeon, rather than thus to have sinned against his God.*

How remarkable was his Faith, in a hearty embracing and devout confession of all the Articles of our Christian Religion, and all the Divine Mysteries of the Gospel? saying, that that absurd and foolish Philosophy, which the World so much admired, propagated by the late Mr. Hobbs, and others, had undone him, and many more, of the best Parts

in the Nation? who, without God's great Mercy to them, may never, I believe, attain to such a Repentance.

I must not omit to mention his faithful adherence to, and casting himself entirely upon the Mercies of Jesus Christ, and the free Grace of God, declared to repenting Sinners through him; with a thankful remembrance of his Life, Death, and Resurrection; begging *God to strengthen his Faith*, and often crying out, *Lord I believe, help thou mine unbelief.*

HIS mighty Love and Esteem of the Holy Scriptures, his Resolutions to read them frequently, and meditate upon them, if God should spare him, having already tasted the good Word; for having spoken to his Heart, he acknowledged, *all the seeming Absurdities and Contradictions thereof, fancied by Men of corrupt and reprobate Judgments, were vanished, and the Excellency and Beauty appeared, being come to receive the Truth in the love of it.*

HIS extraordinary fervent Devotions in his frequent Prayers of his own, most excellent and correct; amongst the rest, for the King, in such a manner as became a dutiful Subject, and a truly grateful Servant; for the Church and Nation, for some particular Relations, and then for all Men; his calling frequently upon me at all Hours to pray with him, or read the Scriptures to him; and toward the end of his Sickness, would heartily desire *God to pardon his Infirmities, if he should not be so wakeful and intent thro' the whole Duty as he wish'd to be, and that tho' the Flesh was weak, yet the Spirit was willing, and hoped God would accept that.*

HIS continual Invocation of God's Grace and Holy Spirit to sustain him, to keep him from all evil Thoughts, from all Temptations and Diabolical Suggestions, and every thing which might
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be prejudicial to that religious temper of Mind, which God had now so happily endued him withal, crying out, one Night especially, how terrible the Tempter did assault him, by casting upon him lewd and wicked Imaginations, but I thank God (said he) I abhor them all, by the Power of his Grace, which I am sure is sufficient for me, I have overcome them, 'tis the malice of the Devil, because I am rescu'd from him; and the goodness of God, that frees me from all my spiritual Enemies.

His great joy at his Lady's conversion from Popery to the Church of England, (being, as he term'd it, *A Faction supported only by Fraud and Cruelty,*) which was by her done with deliberation and mature Judgment; the dark Mists of which have for some Months before been breaking away, but now cleared, by her receiving the blessed Sacrament with her dying Husband, at the receiving of which no Man could express more Joy and Devotion than he did; and having handled the word of Life, and seen the Salvation of God, in the preparation of his Mind, he was now ready to depart in Peace.

His hearty concern for the pious Education of his Children, wishing that his Son might never be a *Wit*, that is, (as he himself explain'd it,) one of those wretched Creatures, who pride themselves in abusing God and Religion, denying his Being, or his Providence, but that he might become an *Honest and Religious Man*, which could only be the support and blessing of his Family, complaining what a vitious and naughty World they were brought into, and that no Fortunes or Honours were comparable to the Love and Favour of God to them, in whose Name he blessed them, pray'd for 'em, and committed them to his Protection.

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HIS strict charge to those Persons, in whose custody his Papers were, to burn all his profane and lewd Writings, as being only fit to promote Vice and Immorality; by which he had so highly offended God, and shamed and blasphem'd that Holy Religion into which he had been Baptized; and all his obscene and filthy Pictures, which were so notoriously Scandalous.

HIS readiness to make Restitution to the utmost of his Power to all Persons whom he had injur'd; and for those whom he could not make a Compensation to, he prayed for God's and their Pardons. His remarkable Justice in taking all possible care for the payment of his Debts, which, before, he confessed he had not so fairly and effectually done.

HIS readiness to forgive all Injuries done against him, some more particularly mention'd, which were great and provoking; nay, annexing thereto all the assurance of a future Friendship, and hoping he should be as freely forgiven at the Hand of God.

How tender and concern'd was he for his Servants about him in his Extremities, (manifested by the Beneficence of his Will to them,) pitying their troubles in Watching with him, and attending him, treating them with Candor and Kindness, as if they had been his Intimates!

How hearty were his endeavours to be Serviceable to those about him, exhorting them to the Fear and Love of God, and to make a good use of his forbearance and long-suffering to Sinners, which should lead them to Repentance. And here I must not pass by his pious and most passionate Exclamation to a Gentleman of some Character, who came to Visit him upon his Death-bed; *O Remember that you condemn God no more, He is*
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an avenging God, and will visit you for your Sins; he will in Mercy, I hope, touch your Conscience sooner or later as he hath done mine; You and I have been Friends and Sinners together a great while, therefore I am the more free with you; We have been all mistaken in our Conceits and Opinions, our persuasions have been False and Groundless, therefore God grant you Repentance. And seeing him the next Day again, he said to him, Perhaps you were disoblig'd by my plainness to you Yesterday; I spake the words of Truth and Soberness to you, and (striking his Hand upon his Breast) said, I hope God will touch your Heart.

LIKEWISE his Commands to me, to preach Abroad, and to let all Men know (if they knew it not already,) how severely God had disciplin'd him for his Sins by his afflicting Hand; that his sufferings were most Just, tho' he had laid ten Thousand times more upon him; how he had laid one stripe upon another because of his grievous Provocations, till he had brought him Home to himself; that in his former Visitations he had not that blessed Effect he was now sensible of. He had formerly some loose Thoughts and slight resolutions of Reforming, and design'd to be better, because even the present Consequences of Sin were still pestering him, and were so Troublesome and Inconvenient to him; but that now he had other sentiments of Things, and acted upon other Principles.

His willingness to die, if it please God, resigning himself always to the Divine disposal; but if God should spare him yet a longer Time here, he hoped to bring Glory to the Name of God in the whole course of his Life, and particularly by his endeavours to convince others, and to assure them of the danger of their Condition, if they continued impenitent,

penitent, and how graciously God had dealt with him.

HIS great Sense of his Obligations to those excellent Men, the Right Reverend my Lord Bishop of *Oxford*, and Dr. *Marshall*, for their charitable and frequent Visits to him, and Prayers with him; and Dr. *Burnet*, who came on purpose from *London* to see him, who were all very serviceable to his Repentance.

HIS extraordinary Duty and Reverence to his Mother, with all the greatful Respects to her imaginable, and Kindness to his good Lady, beyond expression, (which may well enhance such a Loss to them,) and to his Children, obliging them with all the endearments that a good Husband or a tender Father could bestow.

To conclude these Remarks, I shall only read to you his dying Remonstrance, sufficiently attested and sign'd by his own Hand, as his truest Sense, (which I hope may be useful for that good End he design'd it) in Manner and Form following.



“ **F**OR the benefit of all those whom I may
 “ have drawn into sin by my Example and
 “ Encouragement, I leave to the World this my
 “ last Declaration, which I deliver in the Presence
 “ of the great God, who knows the secrets of
 “ all Hearts, and before whom I am now ap-
 “ pearing to be Judged.

“ **T**HAT

“ THAT from the bottom of my Soul I detest
“ and abhor the whole course of my former
“ wicked Life, that I think I can never sufficient-
“ ly admire the goodness of God, who has
“ given me a true Sense of my pernicious Opin-
“ ions and vile Practices, by which I have hi-
“ therto lived without Hope, and without God
“ in the World; have been an open Enemy
“ to Jesus Christ, doing the utmost despite to
“ the Holy Spirit of Grace. And that the
“ greatest testimony of my Charity to such is,
“ to warn 'em in the Name of God, and as
“ they regard the welfare of their Immortal
“ Souls, no more to deny his Being, or his
“ Providence, or despise his Goodness; no more
“ to make a mock of Sin, or condemn the pure
“ and excellent Religion of my ever Blessed Re-
“ deemer, thro' whose Merits alone, I one of the
“ greatest Sinners, do yet hope for Mercy and
“ Forgiveness. *Amen.*

Declared and Sign'd in the Presence of

ANNE ROCHESTER.

June 19. 1680.

ROB. PARSONS.

J. ROCHESTER.

AND

AND now I cannot but mention with Joy and Admiration that steady temper of Mind, which he enjoy'd through the whole course of his Sickness and Repentance; which must proceed, not from a hurry and perturbation of Mind or Body, arising from the fear of Death, or dread of Hell only, but from an ingenuous Love to God, and an uniform regard to Virtue, (suitable to that solemn Declaration of his, *I would not commit the least Sin to gain a Kingdom*) with all possible symptoms of a lasting Perseverance in it, if God should have restored him. To which may be added his comfortable persuasions of God's accepting him to his Mercy, saying, three or four Days before his Death, *I shall die, But Oh, what unspeakable Glories do I see! what Joys, beyond Thought or Expression, am I sensible of! I am assured of God's Mercy to me through Jesus Christ. Oh how I long to die, and be with my Saviour!*

THE time of his Sickness and Repentance was just nine Weeks; in all which time he was so much master of his Reason, and had so clear an understanding, (saving thirty Hours, about the middle of it, in which he was delirious,) that he had never Dictated or Spoke more composed in his Life: and therefore if any shall continue to say, his Piety was the effect of Madness or Vapours; let me tell them, 'tis highly disingenuous, and that the assertion is as Silly as it is Wicked. And moreover that the force of what I have delivered may be not evaded by wicked Men, who are resolved to harden their Hearts, maugre all Convictions, by saying, *This was done in a Corner*; I appeal, for the Truth thereof, to all sorts of Persons who in considerable numbers Visited and Attended him, and more particular-
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ly to those eminent Physicians who were near him, and conversant with him in the whole course of his tedious Sickness; and who, if any, are competent Judges of a Phrensy or *delirium*.

THERE are many more excellent Things in my absence which have occasionally dropt from his Mouth, that will not come within the narrow compass of a Sermon; these, I hope, will sufficiently prove what I produce them for. And if any shall be still unsatisfied here in this hard-hearted Generation, it matters not, let them at their cost be unbelievers still, so long as this excellent Penitent enjoys the comfort of his Repentance. And now from all these admirable signs we have great reason to believe comfortably, that his Repentance was Real, and his End happy; and accordingly imitate the Neighbours and Cofens of *Elizabeth*, (*Luke* 1. 58.) who, *when they heard how the Lord had shewed great Mercy upon her came and rejoyced with her.*

THUS his dear Mother should rejoyce, that the Son of her Love and of her Fears, as well as of her Bowels, is now Born again into a better World; adopted by his Heavenly Father, and gon before her to take Possession of an eternal Inheritance.

II. HIS truly loving Consort should rejoyce, that God has been so Gracious to them both, as at the same Time to give him a sight of his Errors in point of Practice, and herself (not altogether without his Means and Endeavours a sight of hers in point of Faith. And truly, considering the great prejudices and dangers of the *Roman Religion*, I think I may aver that there is joy in Heaven, and should be on Earth, for her Conversion, as well as his.

III. HIS

III. **H**is Noble and most hopeful Issue should rejoyce, as their Years are capable; not that a dear and loving Father has left them, but that since he must leave them, he has left them the example of a Penitent, and not of a Sinner; the Blessing of a Saint, in recommending them to an All-sufficient Father, and not entailing on them the fatal Curse that attends the posterity of the Wicked and Impenitent.

IV. **A**LL good Men should rejoyce, to see the triumphs of the Cross in these latter Days, and the Words of Divine Wisdom and Power. And bad Men certainly, whenever they consider it, are most of all concern'd to Joy and Rejoyce in it, as a condemn'd Malefactor is, to hear that a Fellow-criminal has got his Pardon, and that he may do so too, if he speedily Sue for it.

AND this Joy of all will still be the greater, if we compare it with the Joy there is in Heaven, in the case of just Persons, that need no Repentance, *viz.* that need not such a solemn extraordinary Repentance, or the whole change of Heart and Mind, as great Sinners do: and of this my Text pronounces, that there is greater Joy in Heaven over one such Sinner that truly repenteth, than there is over Ninety and Nine just Persons that need not such a Repentance. One Reason of which we may conceive to be this; that such a Penitent's former Failings, are ordinarily the occasion of a greater and a more active Piety afterwards; as our Convert earnestly wish'd; *that God would be pleased to spare him but one Year more, that in that he might honour his Name proportionably to the dishonour done to God in his whole Life past.* And we see St. Paul laboured more abundantly than all the Apostles in the planting of the Church, because he had rag'd furiously

furiously before in the Destruction of it; and our Saviour himself tells us, that *to whom much is forgiven they will love much, but to whom little is forgiven they will love little.*

'Tis certainly the more safe, indeed the only safe way to be constantly Virtuous, and he that is wise indeed, i. e. *wise unto Salvation*, will endeavour to be one of those that *need no Repentance*; I mean that entire and whole Work of beginning anew, but will draw out the same Thread thro' his whole Life, and let not the Sun go down upon any of his Sins: but then the other Repentance is more remarkable, and, where it is real, the more effectual, to produce a fervent and a fruitful Piety; besides, the greater Glory to God in the influence of the Example. Which may probably be a farther Reason of the excessive Joy of the Angels at the Conversion of such a Sinner; because they, who are better acquainted with humane Nature than we, knowing it apt, like the *Pharisees*, to demand a Sign from Heaven, for the Reformation of corrupted Customs, discern likewise, that such desperate Spiritual Recoveries, will seem so many Openings of the Heavens in the descent of the holy Dove, visibly to the Standers by; and accordingly will have the greater influence upon them. And 'tis this in the last Place, that I am to recommend to all that hear me this Day.

AND having thus discharg'd the Office of an Historian, in a faithful representation of the Repentance and Conversion of this great Sinner; give me Leave now to bespeak you as an Ambassador of Christ, and in his Name, earnestly persuade you to be reconcil'd to him, and to follow this illustrious Person, not in his Sins any more, but in his Sorrows for them, and his forsaking them.

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If there be any in this Place, or else where, who have been drawn into a Complacency or Practice of any kind of Sin from his Example, let those especially be perswaded to *break off their Sins by Repentance*, by the same Example; that as he has been *for the Fall*, so he may now *for the rising again of many in Israel*. God knows there are too many that are wise enough to discern and follow the Examples of Evil, but to do good from those Examples they have no Power; like those absurd Flatterers we read of, who could imitate *Plato* in his Crookedness, *Aristotle* in his Stammering, and *Alexander the Great* in the bending of his Neck, and the shrillness of his Voice, but either could not, or would not, imitate them in any of their Perfections. Such as these I would beseech, in their cooler Seasons, to ask themselves that Question, *What Fruit had you in those Things whereof you are now ashamed, for the End of these Things is Death?* And if any encourage themselves in their Wickedness from this Example, resolving however to enjoy the good Things that are present; to fill themselves with costly Wines, and to let no part of *Pleasure* pass by them untasted, supposing with the Gospel rich Man, that when one comes to them from the Dead, when Sicknes or old Age approaches, that then they will repent; let such as these consider the dreadful Hazard they run by such pernicious Counsels. It may be (and it is but just with God it should be) that whilst they are making Provisions for the *Flesh* to fulfill the Lusts thereof, and are saying to their Souls, *Soul thou hast much Goods laid up for many Years*, therefore take thine Ease, eat, drink and be merry; perhaps just then at the same Time the Hand of God may be writing upon the Walls of their Habitations, that fatal Sentence, *Thou Fool, this Night shall*
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thy Soul be required of thee, and then whose shall all those Things be, which thou hast promis'd ? And what sad Reflections must such a one need make upon his own Folly, when he sees all that Mirth and Ease, which he has promised himself for so many Years, must be at an end in a very few Hours ? and not only so, but that Mirth turn'd into Howlings, and that Ease into a Bed of Flames ; when the Soul must be torn away on a sudden from the Things it loved, and go where it will hate to live, and yet cannot dye. And were it not better for us to embrace cordially the Things which belong to our everlasting Peace, before they are hid from our Eyes ? Where it not better for us all to be wise betimes by preventing such a Danger, than to open our Eyes, as the unhappy rich Man did, when we are in the Place of Torment ?

BE perswaded then with humble, penitent, and obedient Hearts to meet the Blessed *Jesus*, who is now on the Way, and comes to us in the Person and in the Bowels of a Saviour, wooing us to accept those easy conditions of Pardon and Peace offer'd in his holy Gospel, rather than to stay till he become our Adversary and our Judge too, when he will deliver us over to the Tormentors, till we have paid the utmost Farthing, i. e. to all Eternity : when those who have made a Mock at Sin all their Lives and laugh'd at the pretended Cheats of Religion and its Priests, shall find themselves at last the greatest Fools, and the most sadly cheated in the World ; for God will then laugh at their Calamity, and mock when their Fear cometh, when it cometh as Desolation, and their Destruction as a Whirlwind. And since they would not suffer his Mercy to rejoyce over his Justice, nor cause any Joy in Heaven, as the Text mentions, in their Conversion ; his Justice will certainly rejoyce over his Mercy,

and cause Joy in Heaven (as it did at the Fall of *Babylon*) which would not be cured, *Rev. 19. 1.* in their Confusion. And O that there was such an Heart in them, that they would consider this betimes! that in the midst of their Carnal Jollities they would but vouchsafe one regard what may happen hereafter, and what will certainly be the end of these Things. For however the Fruits of Sin may seem *pleasant to the Eye, and to be desired, to make one seem wise and witty to the World,* yet alas, they are but empty and unsatisfactory at present, and leave a mortal Sting behind 'em, and *Bitterness in the latter End*; like the Book St. *John* eat, (*Rev. 10. 10.*) which in his Mouth was sweet as Honey, but as soon as he had eat it, his Belly was bitter. And that God should please at last to bring Men back in their old Age from their sinful Courses, by a way of weeping, to pluck them as *Fire-brands* out of *everlasting Burnings*; yet if Men consider how rare and difficult a Thing it is to be *born again when one is old*, how many Pangs and Violences to Nature there must needs be, to put off the Habits and Inclinations to old Sins, as difficult (saith the Prophet) *as for the Leopard to change his Spots, or the Æthiopian his Skin*: And then when that's done, what Scars and Weaknesses even a Cure must leave behind. I say, he that duly considers this, will think it better to secure his Salvation, and all his present true Comforts, by preserving his Innocency, or alleviating his Work by a daily Repentance for lesser Failings, then to venture upon one single Chance of a Death-bed Repentance; which is no more to be depended upon, for the Performance, or Acceptance, than it can encourage any Man not to labour, because *Elias* was fed by *Ravens*, or the *Israelites* with *Manna* from Heaven.

IE then there be any (tho' alas that need not be asked) that have made the greatness of their Wit, or Birth, or Fortune, *instruments of Iniquity to Iniquity*; let them now convert them to that Original noble Use for which God intended them, *viz. to be instruments of Righteousnes unto Holiness.*

TO these especially that are thus great, not only God, but this great Person also, by my Mouth, *being dead yet speaketh*; for as St. Paul seem'd more especially concern'd for his Brethren and Kinsmen according to the Flesh, and even the rich Man in Hell, tho' sufficiently distracted, by his own Sufferings, yet seems hugely desirous that one might be sent from the dead to his Brethren, that he might *testifie unto them, lest they also come into that Place of Torment*: so this Illustrious Convert, after God had open'd his Eyes to see his Follies, was more especially desirous of the Salvation of those that were his Brethren, tho' not in the Flesh, yet in the greatness of their Quality, and of their Sins; passionately wishing, *that all such, were not only almost, but altogether such as he now was*, saving his bodily Afflictions; and of great Force methinks, should the admonitions of a dying Friend be.

NOW these especially I would beseech, as the Minister of Christ, and such as, *tho' we are reviled we Bless, tho' we are defamed we Intreat, to suffer the word of Exhortation*, that they would not terminate their Eyes upon the outward Pomp and Pageantry that attends them, as the vulgar Jews did upon their Rites and Ceremonies; but (as the wiser *Israelites*, who esteem'd those glittering formalities as the Types and Images of heavenly Things,) be quickned by them to the
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ambition of original Honours, and future Glory. How much were it to be wish'd, that such Persons especially would be Followers of God and Goodness, since whether they will or no, other Men will be Followers of them.

It is true, the Temptations of great Persons are more, and greater than those of Inferiors; but then their Abilities and Understandings are ordinarily greater too; and if they lie more open to the Assaults of the Devil, they have generally greater Sagacity to foresee the Danger, and more powerful Assistance to go through it. Nor is Piety inconsistent with Greatness, any more than it is with Policy, but is the best Foundation and Security both to the one and the other. The Breeding of *Moses* at Court, without doubt contributed much even to his Religious performances, at least so far, as to make them more useful and exemplary to others: But then he was sincerely Virtuous all the while, as well whilst reputed the Son of *Pharaoh's* Daughter, as when *Jethro's* Son-in-law.

WE find Christians in *Cesar's* Household as soon as any where else in *Rome*; and when Christianity had once gain'd *Constantine*, it spread itself farther over the Empire in a few Years, than before it had done in some Centuries. Since then so much Good or Mischief depends upon illustrious Examples, will it not better become Men to draw the Multitude after them to Heaven, by their Piety, than by infectious Guilt, be at the Head of a miserable Company of the Damn'd.

'TIS this Piety, a timely and exemplary Piety, that will perpetuate to Men of Birth and Fortunes, their Honours, and their Estates too, as well by deriving on them the Blessing of God, who is the true Fountain of Honour; as by creating

ating an Awe and Reverence for them from all Orders of Men, even to many Generations ; a Reverence which will be fresh and lasting, when all the Trophies of Wit and Gaity are laid in the Dust. 'Tis this Piety that will be the Guide of their Youth, and the Comfort of their Age ; *for length of Days are in her right Hand, and in her left Hand Riches and Honour.* 'Tis this, and this only, that can make all outward Blessings comfortable, and indeed Blessings to us, by making them the Steps and Means of attaining the never fading Honours and incomprehensible Glories of that Kingdom which is above ; where there shall be no more Sin, nor Sicknes, nor Pain, nor Tears, nor Death, but we shall rest from all our Labours, and our Works shall follow us.

Unto which God of his infinite Mercy bring us, for the Merits and Mediation of Jesus Christ our Saviour ; to whom with the Father and Holy Spirit, let us ascribe all Praise and Adoration, now and for ever. Amen.

F I N I S.

